



February 2004

## **MHCA – Activities Report**

*Winnipeg, Manitoba* - The Manitoba Heavy Construction Association (MHCA) continues to advance policy issues in the fields of infrastructure investment, safety health and environment, the education and training of new skilled labourers and heavy equipment operators, regulatory review and a myriad of related files. Each of these reflect priorities identified by our members and each position is carefully developed to ensure consistency with the broad public interest.

### **Public Opinion & Media Presence**

The MHCA Board has established that the most important priority is reaching the public with our messages, and not worry about the self-interest tag. Why worry if for example, the health care interests groups don't concern themselves about the same.

The good news is that public polling by Pollara, Western Opinion Research, Canada West Foundation and Environics over the last three years has consistently demonstrated:

- public dissatisfaction with the condition of roads, highways and infrastructure;
- there is strong support for increased funding towards streets and highways.
- public concern that its quality of life will deteriorate without sustained investment in the infrastructure; and
- new public support for dedicated taxes.

It is submitted that all levels of government are aware of the public's overall dissatisfaction and concern about the state of streets and highways. What remains is that practical, cost-effective solutions be implemented to address the problems backed by an informed and supportive body of public opinion.

### **Other**

In 2004, the MHCA will endeavor to address the following matters which are of importance to the industry, namely:

- Participate in '**2020 Manitoba's Transport Vision**' process started by the provincial government to shape a transportation investment strategy for the future. To date, the public's and stakeholders' views have supported positions consistently articulated by the MHCA, including dedicating road fuel taxes towards streets and highways, and managing the investment through an arm's length Manitoba Transportation Authority (MTA).
- Pursue creation of an arm's length **Manitoba Transportation Authority (MTA)** to project manage investment in Manitoba's highways system, harnessing the private sector's delivery skills, funded by provincial fuel taxes dedicated entirely to such purposes.
- Pursue with the provincial government, Winnipeg Mayor Glen Murray, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM) and other stakeholders, the evolution of the announced concept of **allocating a portion of federal fuel taxes** towards municipal infrastructure and transportation in a long term sustained and predictable fashion.
- Pursue **increases to the provincial highways capital program**. In 1997 the Highways Department estimated that the system required \$180 million in annual capital programs and that failure to adjust would lead to exponentially increasing financial demands. Government did not listen and today that number has climbed to \$380 million per year.

While the Doer government committed to a minimum annual investments of \$120 million – well below what is required – it has still failed to deliver even that inadequate level.

- Pursue an **Annual and Five Year Highways Capital Program** to allow industry an opportunity to more efficiently organize around the government's priorities.
- Continue producing and distributing an annual review of **Revenue & Expenditures of the Transportation and Government Services (TGS)** which covers the period 1996/97 – 2003/03. We share the results of our research with government and key stakeholders. It identifies where funds are spent, and trends.
- Continue providing **skilled labourer and heavy equipment operator** training to meet the demand in our industry.
- **Safety Health & Environment Programs (SHEP)** are critical to the well being of our employees, the environment, the general public and individual competitiveness. SHEP will continue to be made available to the entire heavy construction industry in Manitoba.
- **Network with key stakeholders** in Manitoba, western Canada and nationally to ensure that the infrastructure investment message is not lost on either the public or the elected branch of government.

#### Projects on the Near Horizon

For the first time in many years, it would appear that a number of significant construction programs will benefit the provincial economy and hopefully our industry including the following:

- **Compressed Canada Infrastructure Works Program (CIWP)** potentially could result in enhanced infrastructure investment – 2004 example **Kenaston Underpass** - \$40 million;
- **MTS Centre** currently under construction - \$120 million - expected to open November 2004;
- **Human Rights Museum** - an internationally unique structure estimated to cost \$300 million - expected to start 2004/05;
- **Wuskwatim Hydro Dam** - \$1 billion - expected to start 2004/05 – in service date 2009 – currently awaiting environmental approvals;
- **Floodway expansion** - \$600 million - expected to start 2005; (\$240 million already committed by the federal and provincial governments; environmental license anticipated for December 2004);
- **Manitoba Hydro Building** - \$100 million - expected to start 2004/05;
- **Enhanced investment in Winnipeg's infrastructure** by up to \$120 million annually dependant upon timing of the *New Deal* with provincial and federal government - expected to start 2004/05;

The above is but a sample of the issues addressed on an ongoing basis by the MHCA Board and its standing committees. The MHCA continues its focus on the future for that is where our success lies. With your support, encouragement, constructive criticism and advice, we will continue to influence and make a difference.

Respectfully submitted,



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MHCA Chairman